



Best Practices Review

Substantive and technical guidance for the historic preservation community

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Featured Topic: Determining Level of Significance

Introduction

In late 1966, an NPS task force of preservation professionals began planning for the administration of the National Register of Historic Places. Mindful that the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 called for an “expansion” of the national register of nationally significant properties created under the Historic Sites Act of 1935, this new, formal register would also include properties of local and state significance. The task force discussed the idea of “ranking” properties with proposed categories of “must,” “should,” and “desirable” to preserve but ultimately adopted

different levels of significance (see [“The National Historic Preservation Act and the National Park Service: A History,” by Barry Mackintosh, NPS History Division, 1986](#), for a history of the early days of the National Register). The first registration form—the “Inventory–Nomination Form” issued in 1968—included a checkbox for the nominating authority (at that time, styled the “State Liaison Officer”) to indicate the property’s level of significance: national, state or local. Today, approximately 70% of the properties listed in the National Register are significant at the local level, with 24% significant at the state level and 9% at the national level (National Register Information System (NRIS), accessed February 25, 2026). (These percentages total more than 100% as some properties are listed at more than one level, and typically in different areas, of significance.)

The significance of a historic property is judged and explained when it is evaluated within its historic context and those historic contexts are found at a variety of geographical levels or scales (*National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Criteria Bulletin), pp. 7, 9). That scale may be

A Note to Our Readers

Beginning with this issue, the Best Practices Review incorporates our companion quarterly publication, the E-blast. The Best Practices Review was developed to expound on the guidance found in the National Register’s formal guidance documents, such as National Register Bulletins and Keeper letters, while the E-blast historically provided program operational information and professional practice advice. The Best Practices Review will continue to provide substantive guidance, while the technical information typically found in the E-blast will be included in a separate section, “Practice Strategies.”

The Best Practices Review will continue to be posted to the [National Register’s publications page](#). To receive this publication by email, please send a request to nr_publications@nps.com.

related to a pattern of historical development, a political division, or a cultural area (*id.*, 9). National Register properties are identified as having significance locally, statewide, or nationally and when a property is evaluated for National Register listing, its significance is considered in relationship to other properties and property types within a common historic context, *i.e.*, a historic theme, period, and geographical area (*National Register Bulletin: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (Form Bulletin), Appendix VII, p. 3). Regardless of the scale, it is the historic context that establishes the framework from which decisions about the significance of related properties can be made (Criteria Bulletin, p. 9).

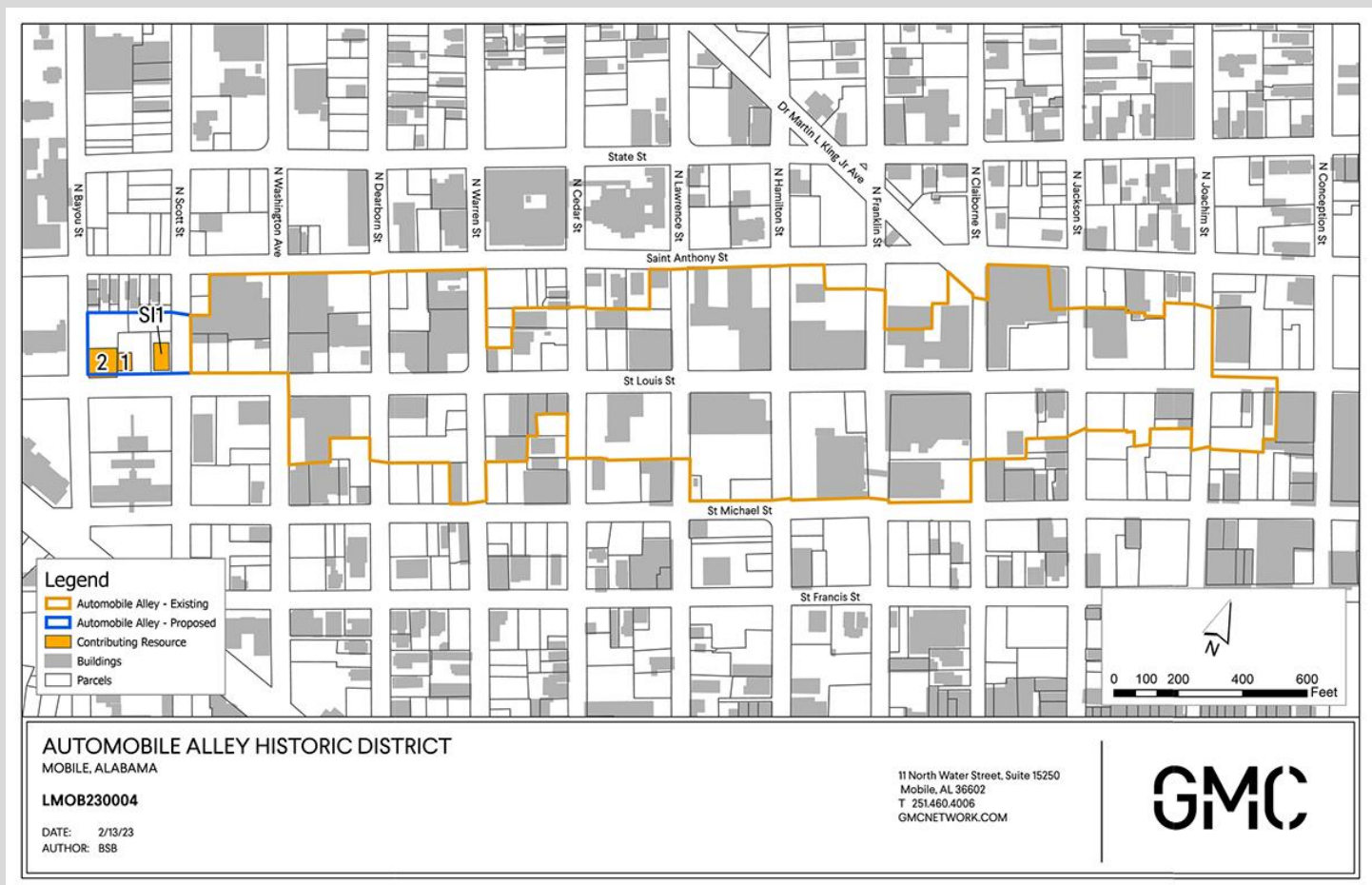
Identifying the appropriate level of significance may be a challenge, especially when a place's historic context extends beyond state boundaries or its significance is associated with a nationwide experience, such as the fight for equality in education. This issue of the *Best Practices Review* illustrates the different levels of significance through examples of listings of local, state, and national significance, as well as multiple levels of significance.

Local Significance

A property that is locally significant represents an aspect of the history of a community, town, city, county, or a cultural area or region within a state (Criteria Bulletin, p. 9). For example, the **Irishtown Commercial Historic District** (100012766) in Fort Wayne, Indiana, was listed in the National Register in 2026 for its local significance under Criterion A for commerce and Criterion C for architecture. This single block of commercial buildings was constructed during the second half of the 19th century in the Italianate, Romanesque, and Neoclassical styles and during the first decades of the 20th century in a more contemporary style featuring glazed tile block, limestone ashlar, and concrete block (Irishtown Registration Form, p. 5). The Irishtown Commercial Historic



Irishtown Commercial Historic District, Fort Wayne, Indiana. (Photograph by Kurt West Garner.)



Automobile Alley Historic District, Mobile, Alabama, 2023 boundary map.

District is significant both for its extant 19th-century resources and for its development as a response to a residential neighborhood's need for commercial services in an area not served by expanding streetcar lines (Irishtown Registration Form, pp. 15-16). The district incorporates architectural trends and development patterns that occurred nationwide (*e.g.*, revival architectural styles, concentrated commercial core) but its significance is grounded in its relationship to the abutting residential area.

Typically, the geographic parameters for evaluating local significance will be the village, town, or city limits (whether or not formally delineated or incorporated) or the county limits. More uncommonly, local significance may be evaluated at a smaller scale, such as a street. For example, **Automobile Alley Historic District** (1000009107) in Mobile, Alabama, is comprised of 11.5 blocks centered along the east/west thoroughfare of St. Louis Street, with northern and southern boundaries extending no more than one block from this central street. The district was initially listed in 2016 with 46 contributing resources for its significance as "the focal point for the automobile industry in Mobile for approximately 50 years" and its "large, mostly intact collection of early to mid-20th century commercial buildings used for the burgeoning automobile industry" (Automobile Alley Registration Form (2016), p. 16). A 2023 boundary expansion added three additional contributing resources to the district. As in any National Register nomination, the property's significance is evaluated within a specific historic context and as documented in Section 8 "Statement of Significance," automobile dealers clustered along this particular street in Mobile due to its proximity to the local rail yard, as automobiles were usually shipped by rail at that time" (*id.*, p. 18).



Burton H. Hurd House, Elma, New York.
(Photograph by Daniel Dannecker, Jill Nowicki.)

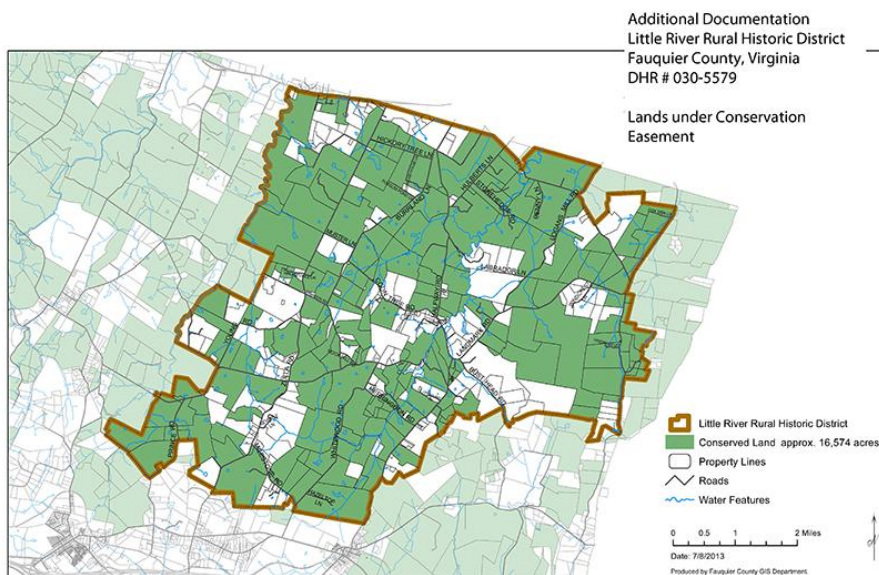
If a property is of a type found throughout a state but its importance relates only to a particular municipality or county, the property would be considered of local significance (Criteria Bulletin, p. 9). For example, the **Burton H. Hurd House** (100012709) in Elma, New York, listed in 2026 under Criterion C for its significance in architecture, is one of many Colonial Revival-style houses found throughout New York state. However, *this* house is significant to *this* community as “an intact reminder of an earlier, idyllic lifestyle in a rural community that was accessible for the upper class in the early twentieth century” and has long been recognized as “a local landmark by [Elma] residents for its ‘stately and substantial’

design” (Hurd Registration Form, pp. 12, 17). The nomination includes a comparative analysis that concludes that “Elma has very few residential examples that exhibit the same level of high style design that is displayed at the Burton Hurd House” (Hurd Registration Form, p. 18).

A property may be significant to more than one community or area without achieving statewide significance (Criteria Bulletin, p. 9). For example, the approximately 23,000-acre

Little River Rural Historic

District (14000011) in Virginia includes several formally established villages and was listed in 2014 as *locally* significant under Criterion A for agriculture, transportation, industry, military, entertainment/recreation, and conservation, and Criterion C for its “abundant diversity of architecturally significant dwellings and agricultural buildings” spanning two centuries (Little River Registration Form, pp. 95-96). (The map reveals a large proportion of land devoted to conservation, demonstrating why eligibility of this district is not precluded although a majority of resources are noncontributing to its significance (1,719 noncontributing versus 1,445 contributing). The



Little River Rural Historic District boundary map.

nomination includes a very detailed inventory and district map, a best practice for a district this size. The significance of this place does not reflect matters of importance to the state of Virginia but rather to the communities and residents that comprise the district.

State Significance



Dayton's Department Store, Minneapolis, Minnesota. (Photograph by Morgan Scheff.)

On the other hand, a property whose historic significance or information potential extends beyond a single local area may be significant at the state level (Criteria Bulletin, p. 9). An excellent example is the **Dayton's Department Store** (100004147) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, built in 1902 with multiple additions in 1910, 1912, 1928, 1937, 1945, 1958, and 1963.

This building is the type of palatial department store once found in many large cities. The downtown Minneapolis location was the company's first store, as well as its flagship store and corporate headquarters, where decisions were made that had a "profound impact on Minnesota's retail landscape," notably, in revolutionizing retail discount shopping (Dayton Registration Form, p. 20). With the decline of inner-city downtowns due to post-war suburbanization and the simultaneous development of suburban shopping centers, downtown businesses had to expand geographically and in Minnesota this began west of Minneapolis in Edina with the Southdale Shopping Center in 1956. Dayton's responded to the changing market by serving as anchor stores for several shopping centers. The period of significance for Minnesota's Dayton's Department Store ends in 1967 with a corporate buy-out of the family-owned business.

A rural example of a property whose historic significance extends beyond a single local area and that is significant at the state level is the **Green River Drift** (120001224) in Wyoming. The 58-mile Drift "has functioned as the essential connector between seasonal grazing lands for cattle ranches in the Upper Green River Valley" of Sublette County (Drift Registration Form, p. 3). As documented in the nomination, moving cattle along the Drift has been a way of life in this area for well over one hundred years, becoming a part of the regional culture (*id.*, p. 26).



Pride's Sampson post, Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. (Photograph by Tamara Thomsen.)

A property does not need to be of a type found throughout a state for it to be significant at the state level; rather, it is the reach of the impact of that property that may support statewide significance (Criteria Bulletin, p. 9). For example, it is the nature of shipwrecks to be in waters abutting a state's shoreline; nevertheless, a ship is not typically significant for only shorefront communities' activities but rather for matters, such as commerce, that impacted either a region of the state or the state as a whole. For example, the ***Pride Shipwreck*** (100010860), partially embedded in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, is significant at the state level for its role in the Great Lakes lumber and bulk cargo trades (Pride Registration Form, p. 12).

Precontact sites and indigenous historic places do not realistically have "state" significance because states are relatively recent political entities and usually do not correspond closely to Native American political territories or cultural areas; nevertheless, numerous sites may geographically encompass parts of one or more states and such a place would be considered to have "state" significance (Criteria Bulletin, p. 9). Archeological resources significant at the state level may illustrate regional patterns, events, or time periods, informing an understanding of the chronology of a cultural group or series of groups.

National Significance

There are many historical events that span modern political boundaries—the struggle for equality in education, the development and construction of a national highway system—that are reflected in the built environment. For example, New Deal economic and cultural programs such as the Works Progress Administration and the Federal Art Project resulted in vital infrastructure and thousands of murals and sculptures in communities across the nation. However, association with national issues, trends, or formal programs does not necessarily confer national significance, as that term is understood in National Register practice.



Greenwood Historic District, east side 100 Block N. Greenwood Avenue, Tulsa, Oklahoma. (Photograph by Vanessa Adams-Harris.)



Ursula K. Le Guin House, Portland, Oregon. (Photograph by Nika Faulkner.)

A property with national significance illustrates the nationwide impact of events or persons associated with the property, its architectural type or style, or information potential. It must be of exceptional value in representing or illustrating an important theme in the history of the nation (Criteria Bulletin, p. 10). The **Greenwood Historic District** (100008199), discussed in more detail, below, is nationally significant, in part, under Criterion A as the location of one of the largest and most devastating examples of race-related violence and destruction in

American 20th century history (Greenwood Registration Form, p. 77). The **Ursula K. Le Guin House** (1000013139) at 3321 N.W. Thurman Street in Portland, Oregon, is nationally significant under Criterion B for its association with Ursula K. Le Guin, a multiple-award-winning author and “one of the most influential female literary figures of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, particularly in the genres of science fiction and fantasy” (Le Guin House Registration Form, p. 11). As documented in this thorough nomination, the circa-1908 house was Le Guin’s primary home and creative workspace from 1960 until her death, encompassing the most productive decades of her career (*id.*, p. 31).

Just as state-level significant properties do not need to be a property type found throughout a state, nationally significant properties do not have to be a property type found throughout the entire country and can be a type located in only a portion of the country or its territories (Criteria Bulletin, p. 10). For example, the **Powars II Paleoindian Hematite Quarry** (100006494) is the only Paleoindian-aged hematite quarry in the United States (and one of only four such sites in the Americas) and is the source of one of the largest Paleoindian artifact assemblages in North America. This archeological site in Wyoming demonstrates how scholarly context and national-scale research questions support significance under Criterion D for information potential at the national level of significance. Non-local raw materials from

Powars II span swaths of the nation between the Canadian and Mexican borders to the north and south and from the Great Plains to the Great Basin to the east and west. The site has the capacity to provide greater understanding of the earliest inhabitants of the Americas.

Multiple Levels of Significance

A property may be significant at more than one level, typically in different areas of significance. For example, **Greenwood Historic District** was listed in the National Register in 2022 as significant at both the local and national levels. The Greenwood Historic District is a discontinuous district composed of 13 buildings in the southern section of Tulsa's Greenwood community, an area known historically as "Deep Greenwood" and the "Negro/Black Wall Street" (Greenwood Registration Form, p. 4). The period of significance begins in 1905 with the construction of a house and a store by farmer and entrepreneur O. W. Gurley through 1967 when massive demolition for the Crosstown Expressway commenced through Deep Greenwood (Greenwood Registration Form, p. 5). The Greenwood Historic District is locally significant for architecture and for community planning and development, and nationally significant for social history and African American heritage for embodying both resourcefulness and resilience despite widespread racial prejudice and violence (*id.*, pp. 21-25). The nomination's Section 8 "Statement of Significance" clearly identifies the criteria, and areas and levels of significance, with descriptive subheadings:

- Criterion A: Community Planning and Development (local level of significance)
- Criterion C: Architecture (local level of significance)
- Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage: African American (national level of significance)
- Criterion A: Social History (national level of significance)

(*Id.*, pp. 21-25.)

Each subheading is followed by one to four paragraphs placing the historical events and built environment of the Greenwood Historic District into this National Register framework. The nomination then provides an extensive context with themes based in place and time, describing the development and redevelopment of the Greenwood area and recounting the events and impacts of the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921, urban renewal, and highway construction. The nomination concludes by linking the context to National Register standards in a section entitled "Eligibility Criteria, Period, Level and Areas of Significance" (Greenwood Registration Form, pp. 77-78).

Very rarely, a property will be listed at the local, state, and national levels of significance. Of over 100,000 properties listed in the National Register, only approximately 500 are listed for their significance at all three levels (National Register Information System, accessed May 14, 2026).

A recent listing significant at all three levels is **Bricklayers Hall** (100005355) in Montgomery, Alabama. The modest two-story brick building served as the headquarters of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)(the organizing force behind the seminal 381-day Montgomery Bus Boycott) and the offices of Charles S. Conley, Jr., a successful African American civil rights lawyer who won multiple segregation and discrimination cases.

Bricklayer's Hall was listed in 2020 under Criterion A at the national, state, and local level of significance, and Criterion B at the state and local levels of significance. Section 8 "Statement of Significance" is structured to

separately address each criteria and areas and levels of significance, with each discussion identified by a descriptive subheading:

- “Bricklayers Hall and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1956 (Criterion A, national, state, local significance in Politics/Government, Ethnic Heritage: Black, and Social History)” details the national, state, and local impacts of the boycott (Bricklayer’s Hall Registration Form, pp. 15-20).
- “Bricklayers Hall and the Montgomery Improvement Association, 1956-1960 (Criterion A, state and local significance in Ethnic Heritage: Black and Social History)” documents the continuing work of the MIA in Montgomery and Alabama (Bricklayer’s Hall Registration Form, p. 20).
- “Criterion B: Law (state and local significance)” discusses the work of Charles S. Conley, Jr., who played an important role in the legal fight for African American civil rights in Montgomery and Alabama (Bricklayer’s Hall Registration Form, pp. 20-26).



Bricklayer’s Hall, Montgomery, Alabama, central conference room and back office. (Photograph by Evelyn Causey.)

Providing a Comparative Analysis

When a property is evaluated for National Register listing, its significance is considered in relationship to other properties and property types within a common historic context (Form Bulletin, Appendix VII, p. 3). This comparative analysis provides a basis for understanding why the nominated property—and not a similar property of the same theme, time, and place—is the one that should be listed in the National Register. This does not mean that a nomination must inventory and evaluate every single similar property within a specific geographic area to identify the property that best represents the context and that only that “best” property may be listed in the National Register. It is entirely possible that any number of properties may be significant for a particular context. Multiple property documentation forms (MPDFs)—the National Register tool that provides a framework for evaluating properties that share a common historic context—are an example of this phenomenon; for example, a number of states have prepared statewide MPDFs to assist in documenting “Green Book” travel accommodation for Black Americans during segregation. (For additional information on these properties, see [Green Book Properties Listed in the National Register of Historic Places](#).)

Once the historic context is established and the property type is determined, it is not necessary to evaluate the property in question against other properties *if*:

- It is the sole example of a property type that is important in illustrating the historic context *or*
- It clearly possesses the defined characteristics required to strongly represent the context

If one of these two conditions do not apply, then the property will have to be evaluated against other examples of the property type (Criteria Bulletin, p. 9).



Winsted Water Works, Mad River Diversion Dam, Winsted, Connecticut. (Photograph by Gretchen Pineo, John Daly.)

A comparative analysis may not be required—or even possible—for a property significant at the local level beyond establishing the rarity of examples in a given geographic area, given that fewer similar properties are likely to be found within a smaller geographic area. For example, the nomination for the **Irishtown Commercial Historic District** in Fort Wayne, Indiana, discussed above, does not compare this collection of commercial buildings to other Fort Wayne commercial collections to demonstrate its local significance because the nomination’s context successfully establishes Irishtown Commercial Historic District as significant to the abutting residential community. Likewise, the **Winsted Water Works** (100005797), listed in the National Register in 2020, successfully documents this property as having state significance for being a surviving property type once common in the state of Connecticut: “Many of the historic water systems in New England are no longer functioning due to the adoption of more modern systems, making Winsted an important early example of a municipal water system in the State of Connecticut” (Winsted Registration Form, p. 13). This historic district of eight structures and two sites is significant under Criterion A for community planning and development and Criterion C for engineering, and has a period of significance of 1893, when the first components of the water system were completed, to 1930, when the City of Winsted gained full control over the Mad River’s water output (*id*).

With respect to properties of proposed state significance, the nomination should discuss not only how a property reflects the history of the state but also the ways in which the property is one of the best of similarly associated properties in the state to represent the context (Form Bulletin, p. 51). For example, the nomination for the **Green River Drift**, discussed above, successfully documents the Drift as “the oldest continually used stock drive in Wyoming” (Drift Registration Form, p. 24). No nomination is expected to provide an exhaustive catalog of similar properties and the Drift nomination plainly states that “[f]ew other stock drives in Wyoming



Green River Drift, Sublette County, Wyoming. (Photograph by Richard Collier.)

have been recorded and evaluated” (*id.*). Nevertheless, the nomination provides a comparative analysis that evaluates five other stock drives, concluding that “[s]ome of these stock drives are still in use, however, they began later, are much shorter, have been significantly modified in the way they are utilized (animals are trucked a portion of the route), numbers have decreased significantly, and/or they were never used to the extent that the Drift was and continues to be” (*id.*, pp. 24-25). The nomination is also notable for its excellent use of oral histories.

With respect to properties of proposed national significance, the nomination should discuss how the property reflects an important aspect of the history of the nation as a whole and explain how the property relates to other properties nationwide having similar associations (Form Bulletin, p. 51).

The National Historic Landmark Standard

The Criteria Bulletin provides that although National Register documentation “includes a recommendation about whether a property is significant at the local, state, or national level, the only official designation of national significance is as a result of National Historic Landmark designation by the Secretary of the Interior, National Monument designation by the President of the United States, or establishment as a unit of the National Park System by Congress” (Criteria Bulletin, p. 1). Likewise, the Form Bulletin notes that a national level of significance “is interpreted as a recommendation only until NHL designation is approved” (Form Bulletin, p. 69). However, in the almost 30 years since this guidance was issued, national-level status of a National Register-listed property is no longer considered provisional or a necessary first step on the path to NHL designation. A nationally significant National Register-listed property stands on its own merits as documented in the nomination.

Still, there are differences between a property recognized in the National Register as nationally significant and a property designated as a National Historic Landmark. One, a National Register-listed property—whether significant at the local, state, or national level—need not retain all seven aspects of integrity (location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, association) but rather the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historic identity (Criteria Bulletin, p. 44); by contrast, an NHL is required to have an overall “high degree of integrity” (36 C.F.R. § 65.4(a)). Two, an NHL nomination’s comparative analysis is expected to include a complete, thoroughly researched analysis of all known similar properties within a particular historic context in order to document the proposed NHL as the best representation of the context (*NHL Bulletin: Guidelines for Preparing National Historic Landmark Nominations*, p. 78.)

Listing in the National Register for national significance may be the first step on a property’s way to NHL designation, although this is not a guarantee. For example, **Winks Panorama** was initially listed in the National Register in 1980 for its *statewide* significance under Criterion A in the areas of commerce and social history as an important Black resort in Colorado. A National Register boundary increase and additional documentation approved in 2014 successfully supported the property’s *national* significance under Criterion A in the areas of Black ethnic heritage, entertainment/recreation, and social history as “a historic African-American resort of the segregation era in the Rocky Mountain West for the period 1925 to 1965” and as “an exemplification of the efforts of early twentieth-century African Americans to create their own opportunities for vacationing, recreation and leisure in response to their exclusion in Colorado from white-dominated venues under segregation” (Winks Panorama (Boundary Increase and Amendment) Registration Form, p. 14). Designated a National Historic Landmark in 2023, Wink’s Panorama is now recognized as nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 as a rare Rocky Mountain destination for safe Black outdoor recreation between circa 1928 and



Kregel Windmill Company Factory NHL, Nebraska City, Nebraska. (Photograph by David Calease.)

1965 (Wink's Panorama NHL Nomination, p. 3). The NHL nomination presents a comparative analysis of Black mountain resorts, with Wink's identified as "the only Black resort between Minnesota and southern California" between 1928 and 1949. By examining comparable properties that are now demolished, the nomination establishes that "Wink's is the only known extant, privately-owned vacation facility providing African Americans access to the majesties of the Rocky Mountains" (Winks NHL Nomination, p. 37).

Likewise, **Kregel Windmill Company Factory** in Nebraska City, Nebraska, was listed in the National Register at the statewide level of significance in 1993 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 2024. The Kregel Windmill Company manufactured and repaired windmills in this building from 1902 to 1941, and the building and machinery are remarkably well-preserved. Although the National Register nomination noted the potential for national significance, the property was listed under Criterion A in agriculture and industry at the statewide level. A rare example of an intact windmill factory in Nebraska, the Kregel Windmill Company Factory is representative of the small windmill factories that "played such a prominent role in the agricultural development of Nebraska and the Great Plains" (Kregel Registration Form, p. 3).

The National Historic Landmark nomination successfully argued that the Kregel Windmill Company Factory merited designation under NHL Criterion 1 as a property significant for events associated with broad national patterns of United States history, with a period of significance of 1902 to 1941. The NHL nomination provided historic contexts on the importance of windmills in settlement and agriculture on the Great Plains and on the history of the windmill manufacturing industry nationwide. The nomination also included comparative analysis with extant windmill-related properties throughout the U.S. Due to the Kregel Windmill Company's high degree of integrity and strong associations with nationally significant trends, the property "is unparalleled in its ability to illustrate the history of windmill manufacturing in the early twentieth century" (Kregel NHL Nomination, p. 3).

Practice Strategies

Executing a Successful Photography Strategy

The National Register Program's [Consolidated and Updated Photograph Policy](#), issued in 2024, includes a number of suggestions for organizing property photographs for a nomination submission. For buildings and structures, a best practice is to organize photographs in a sequence, ideally from the exterior to the interior. For example, for a single resource, the first photograph should be of the primary façade and should capture a portion of the setting. The next photograph may be close-up of the primary façade to show specific character-defining features. The next several photographs should show the other sides of the building or structure, as well as close-ups of any character-defining features. These exterior photographs should provide a sense of the surrounding setting, including the geographic relationship between the primary and any ancillary resources.

Moving to the interior, it is prudent to be aware of the lighting, as both dark corners and bright sunlight can dramatically compromise the image. When taking digital photographs, pause to check the images to ensure important details are visible. As always, remember to photograph full-room views to provide context for subsequent photographs of any character-defining features.

Finally, note that a single resource may need no more than 10 to 15 photographs to properly document the property. For a district, not every property need be photographed; a district may be successfully documented by providing photographs that capture district-defining buildings and character-defining features, as well as streetscapes or landscapes that convey the overall setting, spatial relationships, and visual cohesion that define the district.

Accessing and Understanding National Historic Landmark Documentation

The NHL Program's webpage [List of NHLs by State - National Historic Landmarks \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#) has been updated to include a state-by-state collapsible menu and live links to nominations for the great majority of designated National Historic Landmarks.

Records of most designations prior to 2010 are housed at the National Archives and Records Administration. These files contain nomination forms, followed by images, maps, correspondence related to the NHL designation process, miscellaneous materials, and sometimes monitoring and compliance reports. For most designations after 2010, links are provided to the final nomination forms uploaded to the [NPS Datastore](#). Note that prior to 2016, NHL nominations used the National Register registration form.

Documentation for the earliest NHLs was uneven, and many NHLs lacked precise boundaries. Beginning in the 1970s, the National Park Service undertook an effort to complete boundary studies for these NHLs for which no specific boundary had been identified at the time of designation. These studies also provided additional documentation about the property on National Register registration forms. When available, the boundary study serves as the official documentation for many NHLs.

Other nominations marked as "Updated Documentation" received substantial additional documentation reviewed by the National Park System Advisory Board and approved by the Secretary of the Interior. The updated form, maps, photographs, etc. effectively "replace" the original nomination and/or boundary study as

the official documentation for that NHL. Nevertheless, the original documentation is preserved as it is an official Federal record and may continue to be of value to researchers.

Some nominations are marked as restricted as they contain information that should be withheld from public release under law (including 54 U.S.C. § 307103 (formerly Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966) and/or 16 U.S.C. § 470hh (Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979)). This commitment extends beyond withholding locational information: it also includes any information about a resource's ownership, physical characteristics, or cultural significance if disclosure may:

- cause a significant invasion of privacy
- risk harm to the historic property, or
- impede the use of a traditional site by practitioners.

In some circumstances, redacted versions of these documents may be provided upon request.

This publication complements the guidance provided in National Register Bulletins by providing examples on specific topics. Your feedback is welcome; please contact Sherry Frear, Chief & Deputy Keeper, sherry_frear@nps.gov.

To receive the Best Practices Review by email, please send a request to nr_publications@nps.com.

For copies of the nominations referenced in this document, please visit our [Sample Nominations](#) page.

For National Register Bulletins and other guidance, please visit our [Publications](#) page.

All images are from National Register nominations unless otherwise noted.

[The National Register of Historic Places](#) is the official list of buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture.